

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of serializing an asynchronous communication over a plurality of telephone interfaces using a computer system, wherein the asynchronous communication comprised of a queue comprised of recorded audio segments, the method comprising for each telephone interface in the plurality of telephone interfaces:
 - playing recorded audio segments in the queue in a predetermined order using the computer system;
 - maintaining a current position in the queue responsive to the playing using the computer system,
 - supporting receipt of a request to record an audio segment for inclusion in the asynchronous communication using the computer system, and
 - responsive to the request recording the audio segment, adding the audio segment to the queue, and resuming the playing at the current position.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the playing comprises selecting a place in the queue as the current position and beginning playback of the corresponding recorded audio segment and automatically advancing to next recorded audio segment in the queue when one is available.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the playing comprises playing holding sounds when the current position corresponding to end of the queue and automatically resuming playback when additional recorded audio segments added to the queue.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the playing comprises receiving requests to alter the playback, the requests corresponding to one or more of change the current position to previous audio segment in the queue, change the current position to next audio segment in

4 the queue, skip ahead in audio segment, skip back in audio segment, and speed up
5 playback of audio segment, slow down playback of audio segment.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the requests comprise one or more of spoken
2 audio commands and dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) signals.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the recording the audio segment can be selectively
2 deactivated such that after deactivation the asynchronous communication can be played
3 back, but additional recorded audio segments cannot be added to the queue.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of telephone interfaces coupled in
2 communication with between one and five thousand human participants.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the recorded audio segments correspond to a
2 communication amongst one or more participants concerning an equity issue.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the recorded audio segments correspond to a
2 communication amongst one or more participants concerning traffic.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined order for playback is
2 chronological order.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined order for playback is reverse
2 chronological order.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein a playback flag is associated with one or more of
2 the recorded audio segments in the queue and wherein the playing in the predetermined
3 order comprises only playing those recorded audio segments with an associated playback
4 flag.

1 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising the computer system removing one or
2 more recorded audio segments from the queue according to one or more criteria.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the one or more criteria include a predetermined
2 amount of time such that recorded audio segments recorded more than the predetermined
3 amount of time earlier are removed.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the one or more criteria include a predetermined
2 amount of playback time such that if the playback time of the queue exceeds the
3 predetermined amount of time earlier recorded messages are removed to shorten the
4 playback time to the predetermined amount.

1 16. An apparatus for serializing an asynchronous communication, the apparatus
2 comprising:

3 means for storing a plurality of recorded audio segments;

4 telephone interface means; and

5 for each of the plurality telephone interfaces

6 means for playing recorded audio segments in a predetermined order;

7 means for maintaining a current position in the queue responsive to the playing

8 using the computer system,

9 means for supporting receipt of a request to record an audio segment for

10 inclusion in the asynchronous communication using the computer system,

11 and

12 means for responsive to the request recording the audio segment, adding the

13 audio segment to the queue, and resuming the playing at the current

14 position.

1 17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the means for playing recorded audio segments
2 comprises means for playing both recorded audio segments and streaming audio segments,
3 the streaming audio segments corresponding to audio still being recorded.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the apparatus used to provide a phone chat
2 service.